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MEMORANDUM TO: S/ - Mr. Brubeck

FROM: SA - James C. ^{STO}Thomson, III

I am attaching a copy of a memorandum of conversation prepared by Ambassador Bowie following his return on meeting with Ambassador Dobrynin. Mr. Bowie gave the original of this paper to the President this morning, and he requests that S/S arrange for reproduction and distribution of additional copies to the Secretary, the other Secretaries, the relevant Assistant Secretaries, Mr. Lundy, Mr. [redacted], Ambassador Stevenson, and any others who you think might be interested in seeing this memorandum.

Please return this copy for our files.

Many thanks.

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November 15, 1962

From: Chester Bowles

Memorandum of Conversation with
Ambassador Dobrynin on Thursday, November 15th
2808 N Street

Following the memorial service for Mrs. Roosevelt, Ambassador Dobrynin came to my house at 2808 N Street for lunch. This was a follow-up to our luncheon at the Soviet Embassy on the 13th of October just before I left for Africa.

[I opened the exchange by saying that when I left for Africa, I had been gravely concerned by preliminary indications that the USSR was introducing offensive weapons into Cuba; I had tried to warn him then that unless this situation was quickly reversed, President Kennedy would have no alternative but to make the firmest kind of response.]

Although the situation had developed as I had feared it might, I was relieved that Mr. Khrushchev had recognized the President's determination and had agreed to withdraw the offensive weapons. (I added parenthetically]

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that it was my assumption that the Ambassador had not personally known that offensive weapons were being placed there; he seemed pleased to be thus let off the hook.)

I then remarked that the Cuban controversy now appeared to be 90% settled; it would be tragic for us to get into a dispute as to how the various remaining elements could be cleared up once and for all. I hoped therefore that the questions of bombers and inspection could be worked out satisfactorily in the very near future.

Dobrynin agreed that much progress had been made but suggested that the only contributions to agreement thus far had been made by the USSR, not by us, and that a proud nation such as the Soviet Union naturally expects to be met half way by reciprocal concessions.

I replied that since I had only recently returned to Washington I was not completely familiar with all the exchanges; I understood, however, that Mr. Khrushchev had agreed to remove any weapons which we considered offensive--which classification would, of course, include the bombers.

More than that, we had already reduced the blockade and, further, had accepted the existing evidence that 42 missiles had left the island. If we had wanted to make trouble, we could have been far stickier on the latter point; indeed many

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Cubans insisted that additional missiles are still hidden in Cuban caves.

Instead, we had expressly acted on the assumption that the Soviet Union was telling the truth in this case even though it had not been candid in earlier weeks. Dobrynin did not argue these points and, indeed, agreed with my interpretation of Mr. Khrushchev's wording in regard to offensive weapons. He argued, however, that since the bombers were 15 years old (indeed no such planes were now operative in the Soviet Air Force), it was unnecessary for us to be concerned about them.

I replied that he had missed the central point which concerned us, i.e., that while we recognize that the Soviet Union understood the destructiveness of modern war and was willing to adopt a reasonable course of action to avoid such conflict, there is no evidence whatsoever that Castro understood it.

On the contrary, Castro appeared emotionally unstable, and it was not at all inconceivable that he might load these antiquated planes with bombs and drop them on New Orleans, Mobile or Miami. He might then maneuver the situation

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to make it appear that the attacks had been sponsored by the USSR and thus attempt to draw the Soviet Union and the U.S. into a conflict which neither of us wanted.

Dobrynin said that there was absolutely nothing to worry about on this score because our mainland defenses would shoot these bombers down before they were within 30 miles of our coast. Indeed, it might be argued that they were in fact defensive weapons since their only useful purpose would be in the protection of Cuba itself under cover of Cuban anti-aircraft, in the event of an attempted amphibious landing by us.

Again, I pointed out that all this was beside the point since Mr. Khrushchev had agreed to take the bombers out, and we were simply asking him to live up to his promise. Dobrynin nodded and said that the bombers in themselves were really not a problem, but that what the USSR needed was some face-saving quid pro quo so that they would not constantly be charged with succumbing to pressure from us while getting nothing tangible in return.

In reply, I said that I understood their psychological problem; certainly we had no desire to place them in an embarrassing situation since this would serve neither our

[REDACTED]

purposes nor theirs. However, the USSR must not lose sight of the basic situation which, as I pointed out in our first conversation, could only be compared to a U. S. military pact with Finland, followed by an attempt by us to line the Finnish-Soviet border with missiles aimed at Soviet cities. In such circumstances I was sure that the Soviets' reaction would not differ greatly from our own.

Dobrynin then switched the conversation to Cuba's future relationship with the United States. What did we intend to do about Cuba? Would we continue our efforts to choke Cuba into submission, to deprive her of any relationship with her Latin American neighbors, etc.?

I remarked that, in my opinion, this was entirely up to Castro. When he assumed power in Cuba, many Americans had welcomed his assertion that he intended to provide a better, freer life for the Cuban people. When he came to the U.S., he was treated cordially and indeed attracted large crowds in both New York and Boston.

However, without any provocation he had turned viciously against us and then launched a major effort to subvert the Alliance for Progress, which represented our effort to help other Latin American countries create a better life for their people.

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Castro claimed he was against poverty, exploitation, great landlords, etc. Why then did he insist on interfering with our genuine effort to eliminate these evils elsewhere in Latin America?

If Castro wanted to improve his relations with us, the obvious way would be for him to state: (1) that there was no further need for the importation of additional weapons of any kind since the question of interference by him in the affairs of others or invasion by us had been cleared up once and for all; (2) that he was determined to demonstrate to Cubans and the rest of the world his capacity for creating better opportunities and prosperity for the Cuban people; and (3) that he urges all people who claim to be working in his behalf in Latin America to return to Cuba and direct their efforts to peaceful development there.

If he really felt in a generous mood, he could even wish us well in our efforts and suggest a peaceful competition to see which system would provide the best life for the most people in Latin America.

Dobrynin said that he thought we were greatly exaggerating Castro's influence in Latin America, and that our reports on his far-flung organization in various countries were based more on rumor than on fact.

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I stated that we had irrefutable evidence of these activities; and I pointed out that if the Soviet Union is sincerely anxious to improve its relations with us, it was in the USSR's interest to control Castro's efforts to interfere in the affairs of other Latin American nations. Otherwise, Castro would continue to claim that he was operating as a partner of the USSR and in behalf of the world Communist movement; and this would continue to poison our relationship.

To sum it up, I suggested that Castro and the USSR had a simple decision to make: If Castro's efforts at subversion continued, we would do everything we could to make it difficult for the Cubans. In this event the Soviet Union would continue to foot the bills with very little benefit to itself.

If, on the other hand, Castro decided to pull in his horns, the atmosphere might be expected gradually to improve, and the situation would be far less expensive and dangerous for everybody concerned.

The conversation then switched abruptly to broader questions involving long-range US-USSR relations. I

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remarked that once we clear up the remaining elements of the Cuba controversy, it may fairly be said that both countries are moving towards a crossroads of great decisiveness. The next five years might either see a great and costly intensification of the present conflict or a conscientious effort by both sides to negotiate a genuine and lasting settlement.

Dobrynin said facetiously that although he agreed with my general view, he would like to stretch my five years to six years since this was the likely life of the Kennedy Administration, and who could tell what would follow it.

He then asked me to spell out more clearly what steps I felt were necessary to bring about this better relationship. I suggested four points:

[REDACTED]

(1) The Soviet Union must become convinced that its attempts to spread communism throughout the world are no longer worth the efforts and the risks. The policy-makers in the USSR must understand that we Americans view international communism as an ideological instrument designed and directed by the Soviet Union to destroy us and all other independent peoples.

I suggested that this effort is doomed to failure not because the people of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe prefer a world run by America, but because people are committed to their own futures which are bound to be deeply diversified.

I remarked that I had just returned from Africa and I could assure him that no African wants to be Russianized, Americanized, Sinicized, or Anglicized; they want to become free, independent people in their own right.

In this respect, our task was much easier than the Soviets' because we are striving to give people that

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opportunity, and we are sophisticated enough to realize that they are not necessarily going to become our devoted supporters in the process.

Indeed, if the Alliance for Progress succeeded, it was possible that Latin American nations would on occasion see the world situation quite differently than we simply because they had developed a greater sense of independence and self-confidence. If so, we would be quite satisfied since it would also mean they were now impervious to subversion from any outside source.

2. The US and the USSR must come to understand each other's commitments and to help each other to disentangle ourselves from situations which are to no one's advantage.

Under no circumstances, however, could the Soviets expect us to turn our backs on our allies, any more than we expect them to abandon theirs.

3. A nuclear test-ban and eventual arms control were vital. An intensification or even a continuation of the

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present arms race is not only costly to each of us, but also extremely dangerous.

Moreover, if this conflict continues indefinitely, important groups of people in both the USSR and the USA will develop increasing material and psychological stakes in maintaining the present political and military impasse indefinitely. This will mean that each government will gradually lose its ability to change the basic situation.

4. We must cooperate in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons to other powers. It would be particularly dangerous if China should secure nuclear weapons.

Dobrynin asked about Germany. I said that while we had no desire to see the West Germans develop a nuclear capacity, we carry major responsibility for their defense, and this can only be assured with a nuclear capacity in the hands of our troops.

Dobrynin added that many of his associates felt we have been encouraging the reactionary elements in Germany. I

denied this, stressing that when Stalin armed the East Germans, we had to choose between a much more major U.S. force in Europe or arms for the West Germans.

Dobrynin asked if my views about a summit meeting between Kennedy and Khrushchev had changed. I stated that I saw nothing to change the situation since our last talk, when he and I had agreed that it would be a mistake to hold a summit meeting unless there were clear areas of agreement which we knew in advance could be isolated and announced.

I said that in addition to Cuba, which I hoped we could get out of the way soon, perhaps the most fruitful area for agreement would be in nuclear testing.

Dobrynin replied that while he agreed with my response in general, he would like to have us understand that Soviet concern about underground testing was genuine. The USSR, he said, does not have access to large underground caves, as does the United States, and the cost of preparing such caves is very expensive. In respect to weapons adapted to underground testing, he added frankly, the USSR is now

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behind and does not want to see its disadvantage further increased.

I suggested that at least we could announce agreement on atmosphere and under-water testing and possibly work out an agreement that would bring our scientists together for a stated period to work out an inspection system that would enable us to agree to a ban on underground testing. I emphasized that in making this suggestion I was speaking for myself, for in no sense was I an expert.

The conversation then switched to India. Dobrynin asked whether I felt the war between China and India was likely to become more serious. I suggested facetiously that he was in a better position to answer his own question since the petroleum products on which the Chinese were dependent must be coming largely from the USSR and, considering the long supply lines, the undertaking must be a major one.

Dobrynin soberly remarked that the Soviet Union is extremely worried about the conflict, that China was an

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"ally" and India a "good friend", and that frankly this placed the USSR in a difficult position.

Although his government had not made any specific suggestions as to how the conflict could be settled (he did not know whether the McMahon Line was proper or not), he felt that every effort should be made to end the fighting since otherwise it could spread.

I then asked if Nehru had been correct in stating that the USSR was planning to carry out its commitment to ship MIG-21's to India. Dobrynin said that although he had had no recent word from his government, a commitment had been made and he assumed that it would be carried out. Nevertheless, it was embarrassing since it had been made under quite different circumstances, i.e. before the outbreak of serious fighting between the Chinese and the Indians.

I remarked that it would be my assumption that the Soviets would like to have some kind of truce within the next 30 days which would allow them to carry out their


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commitment to send the Indians MIGs, without arousing the ire of the Chinese. However, it was my feeling that the conflict would continue at least into next summer.

When Dobrynin asked why I dismissed the possibility of a quicker settlement, I pointed out that Indian public opinion had been greatly aroused, and even Nehru could not turn it off if he wanted to. Indeed, I could imagine only one way that a truce could become possible in the next few weeks: the willingness of the Chinese to back away completely from their present position, a willingness which could only be produced if the Soviets clamped down hard on Chinese petroleum supplies.

Failing this development, I suggested that the Indians would not be willing to accept a truce until they felt more confident of their ability to handle the Chinese militarily.

In closing, the conversation turned to Southeast Asia. I stated that I had talked that morning with Averell Harriman who was deeply concerned about the situation in Laos. Although,



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Souvanna Phouma was doing his best, the Pathet Lao were continuing to create difficulties. It was clear to everyone that the main source of trouble is in Hanoi. What could the USSR do to help settle this question?

Dobrynin replied that we could count on the willingness of the USSR to do its utmost in regard to Laos. Mr. Khrushchev felt that he had a specific commitment to President Kennedy in this area which he intended to carry out.

I suggested that the real trouble-makers in Southeast Asia were the Viet Minh. Was it not possible for the USSR to get better control of the situation either through supplies or through other means of dealing with the Hanoi government? As long as the Viet Minh continued to supply the Viet Cong there would be trouble in Vietnam, and we would have to stand our ground.

We could not allow the Viet Minh to upset the South Vietnam government, and we had the capacity to keep them

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from doing so. However, the sooner we could settle these problems, the fewer lives would be lost, and the less danger would exist of providing an opening for the Chinese.

As we walked towards the door, I again reminded Dobrynin that he must not assume that the views I expressed necessarily represented those of my government; that I had simply expressed my own frank thoughts in the hope that they might be helpful to him in understanding the way we looked at the present situation.

Throughout this two-hour freewheeling, give-and-take conversation, Dobrynin was relaxed and pleasant; he talked with a general air of frankness.

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